DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 033 CS 203 440

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TITLE A Selected Annotated Bibliography of Articles on Interdepartmental Responsibility for the Teaching of Writing Skills.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 13p.; Bibliography prepared at University of Minnesota

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Annotated Bibliographies; Assignments; *Composition Skills (Literary); *English Instruction; *Expository Writing; Higher Education; *Interdisciplinary Approach; Technical Writing; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

The material reviewed in the 37 articles and papers listed here suggests that responsibility for establishing and maintaining standards for writing among college students is a college-wide burden. The articles are of two kinds: some deal directly with the questions of interdepartmental responsibility for teaching writing; others touch on the subject while addressing related questions. (Author)

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A Selected Annotated Bibliography of Articles on Interdepartmental Responsibility for the Teaching of Writing Skills

Bain, Robert. "Journalism and Composition." Freshman English News, 4 (Spring, 1975), 1-3.

Baum, Joan. "Interdisciplinary Studies, the Latest Experimental Rage." College Composition and Communication, 26, no. 1 (February, 1975), 30-34.

Baum is antagonistic toward the "illegitimate hybrid" called interdisciplinary studies. She offers cautions worth noting, primarily that there is a real danger in losing sight of the sometimes tedious job of teaching writing when this task is placed in the more attractive surroundings of a subject-area like literature.

Brown, Michael R. "Writing and Science: A Freshman Writing Course for Science Majors." A paper presented at CCCC, March, 1975. ERIC DOCUMENT 103 901.

Brown sees the use of technical writing as a useful choice for freshmen who intend to major in technical fields. He finds that using technical material and formats allows him to let "the organization of the topic organize the writing." A useful and practical paper.

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Budd, William C. "An Experimental Comparison of Writing Achievement in English Composition and Humanities Classes." Research in the Teaching of English, 3, no. 2 (February, 1969), 209-221.

"The research hypothesis for this study was that expository writing can be taught as effectively by incorporating instruction into a three-quarters humanities sequence as by teaching it separately in two quarters of English Composition. (210)

"Students who enrolled for three quarters of humanities which incorporated instruction in writing performed significantly better on a final written theme than students who received two quarters of writing instruction in separate English Composition classes." (221)

Comprone, Joseph. "Cybernetics and Rhetoric: Freshman English in an Overdetermined World." ADE Bulletin, 46 (September, 1975), 22-31.

Wide-ranging discussion which raises some important questions about the need to address the student's perception of his or her needs as a student and as a graduate. Describes in general terms some ways in which the University of Cincinnati writing program adapts as a "holistic program."

Connelly, P. J. and D. C. Irving, "Composition in the Liberal Arts: a Shared Responsibility." College English, 37 (March, 1976), 668-70.

The authors describe a faculty-training program at Grinnell College in which instructors from subject disciplines outside English are given guidelines to improve their use of essays, reports, and other written assignments in their classes. The assumption is that "the students' compositional incompetence is not the only cause of bad writing. The single most widespread external cause of bad writing is bad assignments." (670)

Dille, Jean L. "Communication on the Job: AC, DC, and Well-Grounded." A paper presented at CCCC, March, 1976. ERIC DOCUMENT 123-632.

Points out that writing teachers too often write course descriptions and lesson plans based on what they were taught and not on the basis of what the student needs to know. Suggests that "advisory committees" from various jobs and professions be called in to help define the content of composition courses.

Donlan, Dan. "Textbook Writing Assignments in Three Content Areas." A Research Study Conducted at the University of California--Riverside. ERIC DOCUMENT 123-635.

"It would seem that the emerging role of the English teacher is that of a writing consultant, one who helps teachers in other content fields, assign, teach, and evaluate writing." (10-11)

Examines types of writing assignments appropriate to Math, Science, and Social Studies content courses.

Donlan, Don. "Social Studies Textbooks and the Teaching of Assigned Writing." Research Study Conducted at the University of California--Riverside. ERIC DOCUMENT 122-303.

Previous Donlan study is more to the point.

Douglas, Wallace. "On the Crisis in Composition." ADE Bulletin, 40 (March, 1974), 3-11.

A general historical and critical study. Douglas is critical of the insistence on "standard English" but is realistic about the need to train underprepared students to fit the occupational standards current in the dominant culture.

Dudley, Juanita Williams. "Griffin in the English Department." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Secondary School English Conference, Boston, April, 1976. ERIC DOCUMENT 123-627.

Proposes teaching technical writing at the high school level as an alternative to the standard composition course, suggesting that "exercises in mechanism and process description, establishing standards and specifications, and making multiple evaluations will sharpen the rhetorical skills which a composition course is, by tradition, supposed to inculcate." (1)

Fagan, Edward R. "English Departments: Half Slave, Half Free." ADE Bulletin, 45 (May, 1975), 25-28.

Looks the "service" role of the English Department squarely in the eye and concludes that with the new, varied kind of student of the future, "English Departments will have to expand their repertory of contexts, that is, to use film, videotapes, small group work, community-based experiences for the student's initial engagement with the discipline." (28)

Featherstone, Jean. "Who Cares about Good Writing?" University College Quarterly, 22, no. 3 (March, 1977), 10-15.

Addresses the question of interdepartmental responsibility: "If reading, writing, and thinking are the three sides of the composition problem, then a permanent solution can come only when all post-secondary teachers care enough about good writing to require it in their classes. True, professors outside of the writing field cannot be expected to substitute for writing instructors; but they can make their students aware that inability to communicate what they know on tests produces marginal grades, that bad grammar often limits communication

and gives a poor impression of the student, that successful persuasion depends upon clear logic, that quality vocabulary enhances expression, and that the need for coming to grips with the written word does not stop with the completion of required English courses or with the completion of one such course." (14)

Fisher, Dexter and Lois Lamdin. "Libra: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Remediation." ADE Bulletin, 41 (May, 1974), 3-7.

Essential practical essay. The Libra program--an interdepartmental remediation program involving reading, writing, and subject area teachers--is described. A full description of an ambitious program at Hostos CC, CUNY.

Gershuny, H. Lee. "Writing as Problem-Solving in Interdisciplinary Programs: Literature and the Age of Technology." Paper prepared at Borough of Manhattan CC, ERIC DOCUMENT 126-532.

Practical description of a working remediation program focused on an "inquiry method." The general theme is that "interdisciplinary programs encourage students to transcend department boundaries, synthesize information, reformulate concepts, and develop writing skills in the process." (1)

Henry, Robert. "The Necessity to Reform English for Engineering Students." Technical Writing Teacher, 1, no. 3 (Spring, 1974), 7-9.

Addresses the need to take seriously the specialized writing needs of students in technical majors. Rather than offer watered down literature courses, the English Departments must provide technical students with the skills they need. Notes, too, that the technical departments have a responsibility to demand high quality writing from their students.

Hollingsworth, Alan M. "Beyond Literacy." Harry Finestone and Michael F. Shugrue, eds. Prospects for the 70's: English Departments and Multi-disciplinary Study. New York: The Modern Language Association, 1973, 78-89.

Articulate and informed survey of those reasons which compel English Departments to "go interdisciplinary." Like the other essays in the volume, it tends to be abstract, not addressed to the question of composition as such.

Hutkin, Ronald M. "A Vocational Approach to Written Communication: Final Report." Platte Technical CC, Columbus, Nebraska. ERIC DOCUMENT 113-601.

The study sought to "establish whether [students] enrolled in written communication courses will achieve a higher level of proficiency in accomplishing the specific cognitive objectives when the objectives are placed in the context of the world of work or when the same cognitive objectives are placed in a liberal arts context." (8)

The study found that "data clearly indicate that the emphasis placed on careers, decision making, and community resources were not only valid objectives for this project, but also created activities which were instrumental in helping students improve cognitive skills and written communication skills." (37-38)

Larmouth, Donald Wilford. "The Life Around Us: Design for a Community Research Component in English Composition Courses." College Composition and Communication, 23, no. 5, 383-389.

Describes in detail the workings of a research report course at University of Minnesota--Duluth and University of Wisconsin--Green Bay. Topics grew out of real concerns and the execution of the

plan involved close cooperation with faculty in other departments. The results sound convincing.

Larson, Richard L. "English: An Enabling Discipline." ADE Bulletin, 46 (September, 1975), 3-7.

The essay looks at ways in which English can become "the central enabling discipline in the undergraduate's first two years of study," primarily through the ability of English to "equip students to grapple with the abstractions, concepts, and vague or ambiguous utterances they encounter outside of English." (4)

The essay builds to the conclusion that we must move away from our tendency to compartmentalize experience within the narrow limits of departmental designations.

Laster, Ann A. and Nell Ann Pickett. "Technical Writing as an Approach to Freshman Composition at Hinds Junior College." Technical Writing Teacher, 1, no. 3 (Spring, 1974), 1-3.

Describes ways in which the Freshman Writing offerings at Hinds JC use a "multi-approach" with emphasis on practical application of writing skills. Thirteen different versions of the course are offered after consultation with faculty from subject disciplines.

Marder, Daniel. "The Interdisciplinary Discipline." ADE Bulletin, 45 (May, 1975), 29-31.

Addresses the general question of decompartmentalization of the humanities.

Minor, Dennis E. "An Integrated Technical Writing Course." Technical Writing Teacher, 3, no. 1 (Fall, 1975), 21-24.

Outlines ways in which the composition material and course material

for technical students can be combined in stimulating long-term research projects suited to the students' professional goals.

Moss, Andrew. "Writing as Problem-Solving: An Integrative Model for the Teaching of Composition." Education and Urban Society, 7, no. 2 (February, 1975), 187-192.

Describes an integrated course at UCLA "based on the idea that students will learn to use writing best if they are exploring topics that have value and significance to them." (188) Use of a writing workshop in conjunction with four subject-area "companion courses" is delineated.

Ong, S, J., Walter J. "The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction." PMLA, 90, no.1 (January, 1975), 9-21.

Though the tedium of day-to-day composition instruction is remote from Ong's concerns, the article provides a valuable perspective on the subtle, manifold effect that the imagined audience has on the writer at work. The implications for the composition teacher who does in fact see her students as writers are many, especially in terms of topic, subject area audiences, purposes for writing.

Pichaske, David R. "Freshman Comp: What Is This Shit?" College English, 38, no. 2 (October, 1976), 117-124.

Though the article does not address the question directly, the articulate rejection of "proto-PMLA" style is noteworthy--too often the focus in freshman composition is writing literary criticism.

One of the conclusions here is that "good writing is as much a function of content as technique" and that writing teachers need to "give the student something to say before fussing about how they say it." (124)

Recchia, Edward. "America on Film: A Humanities Composition Course." A paper presented to the National Convention of the Popular Culture Association, St. Louis, 1975. ERIC DOCUMENT 103-880.

Suggests ways in which film can be used as a model for good writing. Sees writing, though, as an "exercise" which is "inspired by" the content of the film.

"Recommendations to the Profession: Carnegie Conference on the State of Undergraduate English" ADE Bulletin, 46 (September, 1975), 58-60.

As one of many recommendations, the group says: "We believe that undergraduate students, especially freshmen, should have a choice of several ways to come to and succeed in writing." One of the specific ways listed is "a course that directly involves a prospective career in a given major field (science, for example) and is perhaps jointly taught between departments." (59)

Redman, George W. Jr. "The Philosophy of Teaching Composition Held by Selected Teachers and Students at the University of Northern Colorado, Winter Quarter, 1973." University of Northern Colorado Ed. D. Dissertation, 1974.

Notes that "students do not expect to be held to any composition standard in a subject matter course" (25), and that interviews with teachers revealed "agreement that the best way to teach writing is use of individual conferences to discuss the process of developing a topic in which the student was personally involved." (v)

Scaratta, Philip A. "A Flexible Modular System: An Experiment in Teaching Composition." Boston University School of Education Ed. D. Dissertation, 1975.

Discusses the "content-oriented approach" to teaching composition and concludes that "little has been done in this area." (13-16)

Smith, Marion K. "What Can a Technical Writing Course Offer the Non-Technical Student?" Teaching English in the Two-Year College, 2, no. 2 (Winter, 1976), 115-121.

Souther, James W. "Developing Assignments for Scientific and Technical Writing." A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Modern Language Association, December, 1976.

Articulate analysis of the need for writing in context, emphasizing a "situational" approach to designing assignments. "We must teach our students to analyze the communication situation they face, and to structure a piece of writing to serve that situation." (2)

Thilsted, Wenda H. "An Interdisciplinary Report Writing Course." Technical Writing Teacher, 2, no. 3 (Spring, 1975), 1-3.

Describes a functional, working program at Oklahoma State in which the English Department cooperates with twelve subject area departments in advanced level writing course. Subject-area instructors assist the student with selecting and developing the topic, while the writing teachers direct the writing. The emphasis is on practical skills for a critical audience.

Tigar, Page. "ADE Survey of Freshman English." ADE Bulletin, 43 (November, 1974), 13-23.

The survey itself is not as enlightening as is the criticism of traditional composition methods voiced by some commentators on the survey. The reaction of Geneva Smitherman, Center for Black Studies, Wayne State University, is noteworthy:

It's surveys like this (and I wish to God it were not representative, though I fear it is) that make me ashamed of my profession. For the results reveal that English academics are still into the same ol' same ol': ignoring students and the imperatives of living in a complex, trans-national world. If English instruction is to be useful to our students in pursuit of their immediate academic goals, it should assist them in linguistically and rhetorically conceptualizing complex ideas from a variety of academic disciplines. To many of my colleagues, this smacks too much of what they call a "service course" approach; yet from the students' viewpoint--and I base my thinking on both experience and research--such instruction is an invaluable service, making the agonizing hours of writing and rewriting worth all the trouble. If English instruction is to help our students survive in today's multi-cultural, multi-linguistic world, it must facilitate their competence as communicators in a multiplicity of modes and situational contexts and develop their understanding of communications processes and systems. As humanists, we are striving to produce ethically responsible students who are alert to the power of communication to move and direct human behavior. To return to the basics of the "good old days" (which really wasn't all that good noway, except for those in power--include English profs vis-a-vis students) is to continue insensitivity to student needs and to ignore life beyond ebony and ivory towers. (22)

Weiner, Harvey S. "Writing for the Subject Disciplines: Helping Faculty Help Students." ADE Bulletin, 45 (May, 1975), 32-33.

Concise, articulate, essential article for the topic at hand. Describes ways in which the writing faculty at Laguardia CC work with,

train, and provide materials for subject-area instructors with a college-wide goal of upgrading writing skills and using writing skills as part of the learning process across disciplinary lines.

Whitburn, Merrill. "Technical Communication: An Unexplored Area for English." ADE Bulletin, 45 (May, 1975), 11-14.

Argues forcefully that English Departments should exert whatever leadership force they have in developing technical communications programs on the undergraduate and continuing education levels, and should do so for reasons ranging from the rhetorical to the fiscal.

White, John O. and Norman Braud. "Composition for the Pre-Professional: Focus on Legal Writing." College Composition and Communication, 27 (February, 1976) 41-46. (See also ERIC DOCUMENT 108-220).

Describes in detail the plans and working structures of a course developed as part of pre-professional program at UC-Davis. The strength of the course is found in its being a "joint venture, in which the instructor brings the expertise born of experience in teaching writing to bear upon subject matter that students decide is important to them." (45)

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